



NEWS RELEASE
BLM-MONTANA/DAKOTAS
OIL & GAS FIELD OFFICE • 1101 15TH ST NORTH • GREAT FALLS, MONTANA 59401 • WWW.BLM.GOV/MT

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OP-ED

Contact: Mark Albers
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Dear Editor:

How many of us would like to be able to say, “we own a couple million-acre place in northern Montana?” Well, the fact of the matter is that all of us can. The 2.4 million acres of public land across the HiLine, owned by all American citizens, and managed for you by the BLM is just that.

Management of those lands is exceedingly complex. BLM strives every day to find a balance that allows for economic gain that supports communities while preserving the processes and resources that make these lands special. To that end, after years of careful analysis and diligence, the HiLine District has released its *Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* for your review.

Currently, lands within the HiLine District are managed under the Judith-Valley-Phillips and the West HiLine Resource Management Plans, which are now at least 19 years old. It became clear to the BLM that a new plan was needed to address all of the changes that have occurred over the last 20 years. The HiLine Draft RMP/EIS considers and analyzes five alternatives that address future management of approximately 2.4 million acres of federal surface and 4 million acres of federal mineral estate in northern Montana.

One of many issues addressed in this Draft RMP/EIS, is conservation measures and actions for the Greater Sage-Grouse. This includes a comprehensive list of mitigation measures and conservation actions to protect the habitat, as well as promote cooperative activities to enhance Greater Sage-Grouse habitat across jurisdictions.

Alternative E is identified as the BLM’s preferred alternative. The preferred alternative aims to find middle ground for the variety of activities that can occur on this landscape. However, our range of alternatives offers other approaches that we’d very much like your input on.

A plan of this scale cannot be done alone. Fifteen cooperating agencies including counties, grazing districts, as well as state and federal agencies all stuck with us and worked diligently through an arduous process to make sure we had a strong draft to release to the public today.

We've tried to make it as convenient as possible for you to comment during the 90-day public comment period, which closes on June 20, 2013. CDs of the entire draft RMP/EIS are available and you can always visit the HiLine RMP website at www.blm.gov/8qkd to view the draft plan and other important information.

The public may submit written comments related to the HiLine Draft RMP/EIS by any of the following methods:

Email: BLM_MT_HiLine_RMP@blm.gov

Fax: (406) 262-2856

Mail: District Manager, BLM, 3990 Hwy. 2 West, Havre, MT 59501

Hand-deliver: Havre Field Office, 3990 Hwy. 2 West, Havre, MT

Currently, five public meetings are scheduled to run from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. in northern Montana communities and will be held in an open house forum. Each meeting will include introductions and a brief BLM presentation, but the purpose of the open house will be to offer an opportunity to talk individually with various BLM resource specialists one-on-one.

We do not make decisions concerning our future management of public lands lightly and that is why we have a process to engage anyone who is interested. So, now we ask that you please join us in this effort and provide comments that will help us make the best final plan possible.

Sincerely,

Mark K. Albers
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